The Myth and History of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points in Hungary

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World War I ended 92 years ago, but no genuine attempt has been made to relate the full story of Wilson's Fourteen Points and its influence on Hungarian revisionism and on the Hungarian psyche. The Fourteen Points (and, especially Point Ten) were not simply a statement of American war aims as President Wilson saw them in January 1918. Technically speaking, Wilson's address to Congress is one out of many public declarations of war aims by the belligerents in the war; yet it has attained mythical status, and not just in Hungary. Because of what Wilson came to represent by the end of the war, the Fourteen Points became a symbol of a better future, a world without future wars and based upon international cooperation, including some form of collective security. For Hungarians after the Treaty of Trianon it became an undefined set of "Wilsonian principles" (most notably national self-determination) that should have served as the basis for peace. Since this was not the case, Hungarians expected treaty revision to take place on the basis of these very principles. Interpretations of Wilson's conduct ranged from tragic mistake to willful destruction of Hungary. Communist Hungary after 1956 also considered it something important: it was one of the four American historical items included in the high school curriculum.

This article aims to (1) explain how the Fourteen Points fit into the complex system of Allied war aims towards Austria–Hungary and (2) analyze why the myth of the Fourteen Points came about and how it has

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served (or was prevented from serving) realistic as well as unfounded revisionist expectations in Hungary, for almost a century.

Allied War Aims

At the beginning of the war, Russia was the only major Allied power to declare her intention to dismember the empire of the Habsburgs: this was included in Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov's 13 points in September 1914. Anglo-French war aims against Vienna were based upon *Realpolitik*: they depended on the constantly changing military situation and domestic developments. And although proponents of the dismemberment of Austria–Hungary were prominently represented among the key decision makers in both countries, the issue was first raised in public diplomacy only in early 1917. Meanwhile, the lesser Allies, Italy and Rumania, were promised territories form Austria and Hungary in their respective treaties signed in London (1915) and Bucharest (1916), and promptly joined the war thereafter.[1]

In December 1916 the newly reelected US president called upon all belligerents to publicly declare their war aims. The Allied reply (January 10, 1917) was worded by Paris, and it promised support for separatist movements inside Austria–Hungary. The Central Powers refused to reveal their war aims until a peace conference was called.[2] A dejected Wilson called for peace without victory (January 22), but the Germans went back on earlier pledges and declared unrestricted submarine warfare on January 31. In response, the United States entered the war, but declared herself an Associated Power to indicate that she did not share all Allied war aims. In his speech delivered to the joint session of Congress on April 2, Wilson claimed that the US would fight the war to make the world safe for democracy and to prevent future wars. Four days later, the Senate granted the declaration of war on Germany. The US went on to declare war on Austria–Hungary, too, in December 1917. Wilson's decision to enter the war as an Associated Power gave him more leeway in bilateral negotiations with the Central Powers, but it also limited his room to move in military terms by creating what Theodore Roosevelt

[1] For a summary of war aims see: David Stevenson, *The First World War and International Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), esp. Chapter 3. Hereafter: Stevenson, *First World War*.

[2] Stevenson, *First World War*, 135–38.

called "A Fifty-Fifty War Attitude:" Washington would have to be rather selective in where she sent her troops because they might engage the troops of countries the United States did not declare war upon.[3]

During the course of 1917 Russia changed her form of government twice and exited the war following the Bolshevik Revolution in St. Petersburg. During the war, France had four changes of government; three took place in 1917. In December 1916, Henry Asquith was replaced by David Lloyd George as British premier. In other words: of the four Allied and Associated Powers that would, one way or another, decide the future of Hungary, only the US had the same head of state at the outbreak and the conclusion of the conflict; the winter of 1916–17 proved to be a major turning point for each one of them. Changes in domestic politics combined with the ever changing military situation to continuously re-shape Allied war aims during the war.

With some considerable simplification we might say that the history of the European war breaks down into three major periods. Until the winter of 1916 the frontlines moved rather dramatically. By the turn of 1916–17, the lines froze and this balance was upset only in late 1917 by the Italian defeat at Caporetto and Russia's exit from the war. Paris had legitimate fears that, following a separate German–Russian peace (which did come about in Brest-Litovsk on March 3, 1918), German troops would be moved to the western front and thus Berlin may get the upper hand. This imminent threat helped bring Clemenceau (nicknamed "The Tiger") to power and he brought along a major revision of French war aims towards Vienna and Central Europe. (The third period lasted from February to November 1918. In the final, and quite hectic, year of the war, a major German offensive in July almost broke through in the western front, but by the fall the Central Powers surrendered one by one, and the war ended on November 11 with the German surrender.)

During the critical winter of 1917–18, the Allies logically believed that the only feasible way of preventing German troops on the Russian front from being moved to the French front would be to engage them otherwise. The obvious solution was to remove Austria–Hungary form the war and force the Germans to choose between trying to score a quick victory in the west or securing contacts with German forces in Rumania (the Mackensen Army) and key allies in the Balkans (Bulgaria and

[3] Theodore Roosevelt, *Roosevelt in the Kansas City Star. War-Time Editorials by Theodore Roosevelt* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1921), 54–56.

Turkey). There were two options: Austria could be negotiated out of the war via a separate peace treaty granting the empire of the Habsburgs territorial integrity. Or, she could be forced out of the war by inciting ethnic unrest among the prominent minorities that had had enough of Austrian and Hungarian rule. Either way, the Allies believed, Germany would be forced to occupy Austria and this would delay a major German offensive on the French front until US troops arrived in numbers. The Quay D'Orsay and the British Foreign Office launched a series of secret talks with official and unofficial Austrian and Hungarian representatives, mostly in the spy capital of the war, Bern, Switzerland. In public, they supported the would-be successor states to apply more pressure on the Ballhausplatz and the new Emperor Charles, who had replaced Francis Joseph in January 1917.[4] Since the US joined the war in April 1917, it is in this context that we must look at Wilson's diplomatic moves and performance.

American War Aims and Diplomacy[5]

Until April 1917 Wilson saw himself as a bringer of peace: he offered to mediate in the fall of 1914 and sent Colonel Edward M. House on multiple diplomatic missions to Europe to feel out both sides in the conflict. But, in February 1917, he felt he had run out of options, and asked Congress for a declaration of war on Germany. In his words, this was to be the final showdown between good and evil, or, as he put it, "the war to end all wars." Of course, in 1917 the US was in no position to send a major army to Europe that would significantly contribute to the Allied cause. In fact, in the Congressional debate the main argument was that the economic power of the new world giant alone would settle conflict. Wilson's chief goals from day 1 were: (1) to win the war with minimum American loss of life and (2) to bring about a League of Nations that

[4] For details of the secret negotiations see: Ferenc Fejtő, *Requiem egy hajdanvolt birodalomért. Ausztria–Magyarország szétrombolása* (Requiem for a defunct empire: the break-up of Austria-Hungary) (Budapest: Atlantisz, 1990).

[5] The following summary of American diplomacy and war aims is based on my own: *Through the Prism of the Habsburg Monarchy: Hungary in American Diplomacy and Public Opinion During the First World War*. Social Science Monographs: War and Society in East Central Europe vol. XXXVI (Highland Lakes, NJ: Atlantic Research and Publications Inc., 1998). Hereafter: Glant, *Prism*. Only additional or specific information will be footnoted.

would guarantee world peace and international cooperation. A diplomatic solution seemed in order, as Wilson had to sell his project to friend and foe alike. Thus, from the beginning, negotiation was the central element of his Habsburg diplomacy, too.

The starting point was the Allied note of January 10, 1917, which called for the dismemberment of Austria–Hungary. On February 8, 1917, following the diplomatic break with Germany Secretary of State Robert Lansing sent detailed instructions to Ambassador Walter Hines Page in London, stating that Wilson was "trying to avoid breaking with Austria in order to keep the channels of official intercourse open" for negotiation. "The chief if not the only obstacle is the threat apparently contained in the peace terms recently stated by the Entente Allies that in case they succeed they would insist upon a virtual dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Austria needs only to be reassured on that point, and that chiefly with regard to the older units of the Empire."[6] This note marks the beginning of a secret diplomatic offensive that used public diplomacy as but one out of many means to achieve its goals. The Fourteen Points were undoubtedly the highlight of these public diplomatic efforts, but they must be viewed in the broader context of Wilson's (Habsburg) diplomacy.

Short of a better option, Wilson adopted the "divide and rule" policy of his Allies towards Berlin and Vienna. He launched this policy as a neutral, as we have seen, two months before the American declaration of war on Germany, and pursued this line until five months after he had asked for, and secured, the declaration of war against Austria–Hungary. American negotiations with Vienna were terminated not by the declaration of war in December 1917, but as result of the Sixtus affair of April 1918. It follows from the above that public diplomacy only served the goals of secret diplomacy: and, ironically, it was conducted by a president who called for "open covenants of peace openly arrived at" in the Fourteen Points speech. Wilson clearly proved himself more than the missionary diplomat historian Arthur S. Link saw in him:[7] for the sake of the new world that the League of Nations would bring about, he was quite willing to pursue secret diplomacy as well.

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[6] Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*. 66 vols. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1966–98), Vol 41: 158–59. Hereafter cites as *WWPs* and by volume and page number.

[7] Arthur S. Link, *Wilson, the Diplomatist: A Look at His Major Foreign Policies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1957).

Between February 1917 and May 1918 the American policy towards Austria–Hungary was basically the same: Washington tried to negotiate Vienna out of the war. In this game, public diplomacy was used to raise the stakes for Vienna. In February 1917 the US indicated to the Ballhausplatz that she did not support the break-up of the Monarchy. In April no declaration of war was sought against Vienna, Germany's most important ally. However, Vienna terminated diplomatic relations with Washington in response to the American declaration of war on Germany. Since no progress was made until December, Wilson asked for a declaration of war on Austria–Hungary, too. Meanwhile, the Inquiry began preparations for a "scientific peace," and in its first report it suggested that Vienna's willingness to negotiate could and should be intensified by publicly supporting separatist aspirations inside the Habsburg Empire while rejecting the obvious outcome: dismemberment. It was at this juncture that the President decided to address Congress and outline American war aims in a public address, as he saw them in early January 1918.[8]

The Fourteen Points reflected many of Wilson's concerns about both the war and the future of mankind. Five of the fourteen points dealt with the future of the world: open diplomacy, freedom of the seas and trade, the reduction of armaments to the level of national defense (#1-4), and the creation of the League of Nations (#12). Nine of the fourteen points addressed actual territorial issues. The fifth point called for a reasonable settlement of colonial claims, the seventh demanded the restoration of Belgian territories and independence, while the eighth postulated that French territories should be evacuated and Alsace-Lorraine be returned to France. The remaining six of the fourteen points addressed problems of Eastern, Central and Southern Europe. Wilson demanded the evacuation of territories occupied by the Central Powers in Russia, Italy and the Balkans (#5, 9, and 11), and proposed the liberation of all ethnic groups under Ottoman rule (#12) as well as the restoration of Polish independence (#13). The one point that was worded in a way that it remained open to different interpretations was Point Ten: "The peoples of Austria–Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity to autonomous development."

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[8] Glant, *Prism*, see esp. Chapter 11 on Wilsonian diplomacy.

Point Ten could be, and was, interpreted in two different ways. When he asked for clarification on Point Ten, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels was informed by his own Chief Executive that the United States "could not undertake to dictate the form of government of any country or dismember" it.[9] At the same time, to an inquiry from French Ambassador Jules Jusserand whether Point Ten represented dismemberment, Wilson replied that it did.[10] At that point, it did not; not yet. In a speech delivered on February 11, Wilson added "Four Principles" to the already listed fourteen: the postwar settlement must be a just one (based on national self-determination), people and territories must not be bartered with, and any settlement that would create future conflicts was unacceptable.

Meanwhile, secret negotiations in Switzerland continued between Austrian politician Heinrich Lammasch and Wilson supporter in exile George D. Herron until May 1918, when the publicity surrounding the Sixtus affair, arguably the most crucial diplomatic scandal of the war, rendered all such talks redundant. The story goes back to 1917, when the two Sixtus brothers of Bourbon-Parma offered to mediate (in this case, deliver letters) between Vienna and Paris. In a letter addressed to the French President, Austrian Emperor Charles I offered, among other things, Alsace-Lorraine in return for a separate peace and territorial integrity for Austria–Hungary. While this offer seemed acceptable to Paris in 1917, it certainly did not after the Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Clemenceau now sought confrontation with Austrian Foreign Minister Count Ottokar Czernin through the Swiss press that printed both Allied and Central Powers news in French, German, and Italian alike. On April 2, 1918 Czernin spoke in the Austrian parliament and described French insistence on Alsace-Lorraine as the only obstacle to peace. He was referring to the recent failure of the secret Armand-Revertera negotiations without actually naming them. When the details of his speech reached Paris via the Swiss press, Clemenceau accused Czernin of lying and published Emperor Charles's letter. Czernin asked the Emperor for clarification as he was clearly unaware of the Sixtus-letter. He later would resign and Berlin would force Vienna to agree to the establishment of joint military command under German control (Spa, Belgium, May 2). This, in turn, ruled out a possible separate peace with Austria–Hungary,

[9] *WWPs* 45: 537.
[10] *WWPs* 45: 559.

as the young Emperor had no control over his own army. When Clemenceau was probed in the French legislature about his conduct, he replied that it was a premeditated move to prevent a "half-peace" with Austria. He certainly achieved his goal.[11]

The cessation of secret peace talks created a new situation in Washington. Up to that point, as we have seen, Wilson had pursued a single-track policy of trying to negotiate Vienna out of the war. Dissident voices in his own administration, most notably that of Secretary of State Robert Lansing, became louder and demanded more open support for the would-be successor states, which, in turn, would have amounted to open support for dismemberment. In May, the President was not ready to take that step yet. It was a combination of military developments in Soviet-Russia and the gradual realization of the ramifications of the termination of the secret talks that convinced him.

Wilson found an unwelcome challenger in Lenin for being the prophet of the post-war world without wars. This realization is generally accepted by Wilson scholars as one of the chief reasons why he went public with the Fourteen Points and the Four Principles.[12] He obviously would have liked to see the Reds fail against the Whites in the Russian civil war that followed the proclamation of the Soviet Republic in St. Petersburg,[13] but he ruled out military intervention for two reasons: (1) he did not want to go against his own policy of not interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries; and (2) he had no sizable army or navy available to dispatch to the Far East, since he was under strong Allied pressure to provide immediate military help on the western front. Short of other options, Wilson decided on a policy of supplying the White forces with contraband, but, to do that, he needed at least two things: Vladivostok as a port of entry and the Trans-Siberian Railway as a means of transportation. The Czechoslovak Legion provided him with an excuse to occupy Vladivostok with a token force.

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[11] On the Herron-Lammasch talks see: Mitchell Pirie Briggs, *George D. Herron and the European Settlement* (Stanford and London: Stanford UP: 1932). On the Sixtus affair see: Glant, *Prism*, 261–62.

[12] This idea was first proposed by new left historians N. Gordon Levin and Arno J., Mayer.

[13] For details on Wilson and Soviet-Russia in general and the Czechoslovak Legion in particular, see: David S. Foglesong, *America's Secret War Against Bolshevism: U. S. Intervention int he Russian Civil War, 1917–1920* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

The Legion was 50,000 strong. It was officially under French command and Paris agreed to ship it to the western front to help fight for an independent Czechoslovakia if it could make it to a port to sail from. The Legion secured Lenin's approval and set out for Vladivostok. Because of a series of misunderstandings mostly due to lack of communication, the Legion decided to occupy the strategically important stops along the Trans-Siberian Railway, which was the only line of transportation available. The news of the Legion's exploits in Russia reached Washington in late May, and it opened up the doors of the White House to the first ever separatist politician from Austria to be received by Wilson, Tomas G. Masaryk, the future president of the would-be Czechoslovakia.

The "heroic struggle of the Czechoslovak Legion for independence" captured the imagination of the American people, not least because Wilson's own semi-official department of propaganda, the Committee on Public Information (CPI), secured the continuous flow of information an analysis in this particular matter. Helping the Czechs to fight for their independence proved to be sufficient justification for sending a token American occupying force to Vladivostok. Incidentally, it also prevented the Japanese from moving in and expanding their control over the Far East. Support for the Legion meant support for Czechoslovak independence. On September 3, Washington officially recognized the Czechoslovak National Council as a *de facto* belligerent government.[14] On September 27, Wilson described an additional "Five Particulars" of peace to supplement the Fourteen Points and the Four Principles. On September 30, Bulgaria asked for an armistice, and within six weeks Germany and all her allies surrendered. The war ended abruptly on November 11, 1918.

Armistice Talks and Peace Preparations

As has been mentioned, American preparations for a "scientific peace" began in September 1917. While Wilson was gradually moving away from non-dismemberment, the Inquiry worked on possible means of regional integration in the Danube basin. All possible "trialist" solutions

[14] For a comprehensive analysis of the Wilson-Masaryk meetings see: Victor S. Mamatey, *The United States and East Central Europe, 1914–1918: A Study in Wilsonian Diplomacy and Propaganda* (Princeton, Princeton UP, 1957).

were evaluated and a comprehensive card catalogue and map collection was assembled. When the war did end, the Inquiry was called upon to submit its final recommendations. Sometime in mid-October, a 100-page report including several maps was submitted, together with an 11-page synopsis. It proposed dismemberment, but pointed out that this would be unjust for Hungary. It described the "linguistic frontier… to be constant with the accepted principles of modern democracy," but concluded that "the line of division between language groups is, in many districts, entirely impracticable as a national frontier." This amounted to an admission that the Inquiry could not meet the requirements set by the President in the Four Principles for a just peace in Central Europe.[15] Meanwhile, Vienna asked for peace on the basis of the Fourteen Points in October, but Wilson made it clear that the Fourteen Points had been reconsidered.

In late October, under the supervision of Colonel House, who represented the US in armistice negotiations, Walter Lippmann and Frank I. Cobb prepared an updated commentary on the Fourteen Points, which then was sent to Washington for Wilson's approval. Of Point Ten they wrote: "This proposition no longer holds." This revised version of the Fourteen Points was the official American line that Colonel House followed in the armistice negotiations with Austria. Thus, Point Ten finally came to stand for the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary, although Lippmann and Cobb reiterated that Washington "supports a programme aiming at a Confederation of Southeastern Europe."[16] Regional integration after dismemberment was a relatively new but important development in Wilsonian diplomacy. To understand it, we must go back to the summer of 1918.

During the summer of 1918 Wilson gradually began to accept dismemberment as something inevitable. This was manifested in two projects embraced by the CPI: one in Europe, the other in the United States. The CPI's foreign propaganda campaigns were orchestrated by the muckraking journalist Will Irwin. His right-hand man for propaganda in enemy countries was James Keeley of the *Chicago Herald*, who

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[15] Glant, *Prism*, see esp. Chapter 9 on the Inquiry.

[16] For details of Wilson's late 1918 diplomacy see Arthur Walworth, *American's Moment: 1918. American Diplomacy at the End of World War I* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1972). The appendix carries all the major Wilson texts from the Fourteen Points to the Lippmann-Cobb commentary.

commenced work only in July 1918. Under strong Allied pressure, the American delegates to the Inter-Allied Propaganda Conference in London (August 14–17) agreed upon a new program to liquidate Austria–Hungary and the K und K army by inciting nationalist unrest using an all-out leaflet campaign. Meanwhile, in the United States the CPI began to sponsor an organization called the Mid-European Union, whose aim was to forge some level of cooperation among the would-be successor states. Thus, it was Wilson's openly stated expectation that some kind of regional integration take place in the Danube basin, replacing the empire of the Habsburgs, but the representatives of the future victors in the United States started fighting over the spoils even before victory had been secured.[17]

By the Armistice, Wilson's Habsburg diplomacy had run into the second dead-end street. The first one was the single-track policy of trying to negotiate Vienna out of the war, cut short by the Sixtus affair. The second one was dismemberment combined with regional integration. His own scientific advisors in the Inquiry made it clear that this would not work, and the Mid-European Union collapsed before the armistice. The President decided to put the issue on the back burner and began to focus on the League of Nations. He proposed an umbrella treaty with all the Central Powers that would create the League, and the League would draw the final boundaries in the contested areas, but only after wartime hatreds had cooled off.

The Paris Peace Conference

Wilson's call for an umbrella treaty under the aegis of the League of Nations was the same defensive retreat that he displayed with the "Peace without Victory" speech after his last attempt to mediate in the war had failed. In addition, the lack of a consistent American policy in Paris forced him to make a series of compromises.[18]

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[17] On the CPI see Glant, *Prism*, Chapter 8. On the Mid-European Union and its failure see: Arthur J. May, "The Mid-European Union," in Joseph P. O'Grady, ed., *The Immigrants' Influence on Wilson's Peace Policies* (Louisville: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), 250–71.

[18] The following summary is based on Arthur Walworth, *Wilson and His Peacemakers. American Diplomacy at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1986), unless otherwise stated.

The first of these compromises was about the League of Nations. The Peace Conference created the Covenant of the League of Nations first, but made separate peace treaties with each of the defeated Central Powers, or their successors (e.g. Austria and Hungary). Each of the Versailles treaties included the Covenant as Article I, but they also included very specific boundaries that reflected the largely unchallenged desires of the victors. Following the signing of the German treaty, Wilson returned to the States and submitted the treaty for ratification to a Senate in which the Republicans had won a clear majority in the 1918 midterm elections. The Republican majority in the Senate, driven by genuine concerns about collective security (Article X) and by personal dislikes (Henry Cabot Lodge) of the president, rejected the treaty. Thus, Wilson did bring about the League, but his own country refused to join it.[19] This, in turn, seriously hindered his negotiating position in Paris.

The second compromise was the direct result of the first one. The conference started work with the Covenant of the League, but insisted on various punitive measures (economic, military, and territorial) against the vanquished. The US was not interested in European territorial disputes, and the American Commission to Negotiate Peace (hereafter: ACNP) served as a moderating force in the boundary decisions (e.g. preventing the proposed Czechoslovak–Yugoslav corridor in Western Hungary). However, the committee work was done by the very same Inquiry experts who had reported to the president that they had no "just and practicable" solution to territorial matters in the Danube Basin. With or without the League, this was not going to be an American peace.

In Paris, Wilson was gradually forced to surrender his monopoly over decision making, which was his third compromise. During the war, as chief representative of the United States in foreign affairs, he had a free hand, and he exercised it. The biggest input into his decisions came from without his cabinet: from Colonel House, who accepted no official post during the war. The roots of the treaty fight go back to Wilson's decisions about the composition of the peace delegation. Of the five American

[19] The first and most detailed account of the Treaty Fight was written by Thomas A. Bailey. More recent contributions have come from Lloyd E. Ambrosius. Thomas A. Bailey, *Woodrow Wilson and the Lost Peace* and *Woodrow Wilson and the Great Betrayal* (New York: MacMillan, 1944 and 1945); Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft. Theory and Practice of Liberal Internationalism during World War I* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1991).

Commissioners, only one was a Republican. More importantly, the President left both American Nobel Peace Prize winners (incidentally, both Republicans) at home. One understands his decision regarding the dying TR, but his choice to ignore Elihu Root remains puzzling. Root was the President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Wilson had sent him on a mission to study conditions in Russia in the second half of 1917. Thus, the ACNP was dominated by Democrats, which indicates that Wilson tried to sustain his one-man control over decisions. Undefined roles, parallel sessions in Paris, the constantly changing military situation in Central Europe and clash of egos contributed to nearly chaotic conditions inside the ACNP. Wilson sensed this, and after signing the German peace treaty, he went home and never returned to Paris. The political, economic, territorial, and military decisions about Hungary and the successor states of Austria–Hungary were made after he had departed. At this point in time, Frank L. Polk was in charge of the ACNP. In the face of conflict and challenge, Wilson again retreated.

Peace in the lands between Germany and Soviet-Russia was made according to the designs of French security.[20] The Treaty of Trianon dismembered the Kingdom of Hungary. Hungary lost two thirds of her territory and population: Rumania got a piece of the Kingdom of Hungary which was bigger than Trianon Hungary itself. 3.5 million Hungarians found themselves living in the successor states, most of them just across the new borders. Clearly, President Wilson's ideas (the Fourteen Points, the Four Principles and the Five Particulars) about a just and scientific peace did not apply to Hungary.

Hungarians, of course, refused to accept the proposed peace terms, or the fact that the successor states used military force to lay claim to more and more Hungarian territory. Revisionist propaganda to defend Hungarian territorial integrity and/or to reclaim lost territories started in late 1918 and remained the most important political and diplomatic issue for Budapest until the two Vienna Awards on the eve of World War II.

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[20] Mária Ormos, *From Padua to the Trianon, 1918–1920* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1981), Magda Ádám, *The Little Entente and Europe (1920–1929)* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1993), and Ignác Romsics, *The Dismantling of Historic Hungary: The Peace Treaty of Trianon, 1920* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2002).

Hungary, the Fourteen Points, and the "Culture of Defeat"

In an excellent and thought provoking expose, Wolfgang Schivelbusch reviewed the "culture of defeat" in the American South after the Civil war, France after 1871, and Germany after World War I.[21] Next, I will explain how Schivelbusch's theory fits Hungarian treaty revisionism and the myth of the Fourteen Points.

Schivelbusch identifies the various stages of coming to terms with defeat. Defeat in battle in most cases is followed by revolution. The new elites propelled to power by these revolutions blame the old elite for the war and defeat and distance themselves from the past (purification). They believe that the victors will respect the new political establishment (which is a denial of the old order they, the victors, had fought against), and defeat turns into a euphoric ***dreamland***. However, the vanquished are always blamed for the war, and punitive peace terms are enforced by the victors: thus bringing about a rude ***awakening***. The myth of ***double betrayal*** is born: (1) the victors betrayed us, by punishing us instead of the old order, from which we have purified ourselves, and (2) the leaders of the revolution also betrayed us, because their promises never materialized. The ***legitimacy of victory is questioned*** ("stab in the back" theories), and the spirit of ***revenge and scapegoating*** takes over. Because of betrayal, the ***vanquished become the moral victors*** in the war; their culture is superior to that of the ("savage") victor. Defeat results in moral purification, while victory carries the seeds of defeat in the next conflict. The vanquished reinterpret their own history and come to view the road to defeat a dead-end street. ***Renewal*** is completed by the declaration of the moral superiority of the defeated over the victor.

Defeat was followed by revolutions in Hungary after the First World War. The October revolution of Count Michael Károlyi created its own dreamland and placed the concept of a just, Wilsonian peace (the Fourteen Points) at its center. From posters that read, "From Wilson only a Wilsonian Peace" to the major press organs of the Károlyi period, the media promoted the expectation that the American President was "our

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[21] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat. On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2003). This is the English translation by Jefferson Chase of the German original from 2001. Hereafter: Schivelbusch, *Culture of Defeat*.

only hope" and that he would never accept an unjust settlement.[22] This was clearly an escape from reality: as has been pointed out, Wilson made it clear before the armistice talks that Point Ten of the Fourteen Points did not apply anymore. In this dreamland, Wilson brought the just peace while Hoover provided the necessary food and medical supplies to survive. An alternative dreamland was created by the Hungarian Soviet Republic by claiming that Hungary's future lay in a post-imperialist, socialist world under Soviet guidance. Awakening came when the successor states, with strong backing from the French, attacked the Kingdom of Hungary after the armistice to secure territories and create a *fait accompli* for the Peace Conference.[23] The rudeness of this awakening was made abundantly clear by the Treaty of Trianon. Simultaneously, the myth of double betrayal was born.

The first one was supposedly committed by the Allies in general and President Wilson in particular. According to it, we, Hungarians, got rid of the old order and rearranged our country along the democratic lines promoted by the American president, then placed our future in the hands of the victors and our "trust in the chivalry of the enemy."[24] They betrayed us by not giving us a fair, Wilsonian peace. The second myth of betrayal follows from the above, and was generated by the Horthy regime in the early 1920s. That regime defined itself as "counterrevolutionary" in denial of the 1918–19 revolutions and blamed Károlyi and Kun for defeat and territorial losses. This, at least in part, was due to the fact that the Horthy era witnessed the partial return of the pre-war elite of the Kingdom of Hungary.

Schivelbusch writes, "It is a short step from the idea that victory achieved by unsoldierly means is illegitimate (or deceitful, swindled, stolen, and so on) and therefore invalid to an understanding of defeat as the pure, unsullied antithesis of false triumph."[25] What seemed legitimate and logical from the point of view of the Allies and the successor states

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[22] For details see Chapter 5 in Tibor Hajdu, *Károlyi Mihály. Politikai életrajz* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1978). This is the best Károlyi biography to the present day.

[23] For details see the works of Ormos, Ádám, and Romsics cited in note 20 above. A different perspective is provided in Peter Pastor, *Hungary between Wilson and Lenin: The Hungarian Revolution of 118-1919 and the Big Three* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1976).

[24] Schivelbusch, *Culture of Defeat*, 14.

[25] Schivelbusch, *Culture of Defeat*, 17.

was illegitimate, unjust and unjustifiable for Hungarians. The continuous modification of armistice lines to the detriment of Hungary in 1918–19 as well as the thinly veiled French support for military action against Hungary after Hungary had surrendered all pointed to an unjust peace. Betrayal continued to mix with dreamland when the Hungarians argued that Americans are also morally responsible for the treaty and they should act as impartial judges as they are not interested in territorial gains in Europe. This delusional expectation was further intensified by the fact that the 1921 separate US-Hungarian peace treaty did not include the Trianon borders.

Revenge and scapegoating appeared on two different levels in post-World War I Hungary. On the one hand, the two revolutions created their own narratives and claimed their own victims. During the Károlyi revolution the strong man of Hungary, former Premier István Tisza, was brutally murdered by "revolutionaries" in front of his own family. Like the Károlyi regime, the Bolsheviks also blamed the old order for everything and installed a reign of terror unforeseen in Hungary. The murder of Tisza and the Red Terror created a backlash and a spirit of revenge, and while many of the Bolshevik murderers were investigated by the police and sentenced by the courts, some historians question the legitimacy of these trials and point to White Terrorist massacres west of the Danube in the fall of 1919.[26] In interwar Hungary "Bolshevik Jews" were responsible for territorial losses, in post-World War II communist Hungary "White Fascists" were the root of all evil. This is what happens when historical narratives are monopolized by political ideologies.

Revenge and scapegoating also manifested themselves in the territorial revisionist policies of Trianon Hungary. The "ungentlemanly" Czechs, Rumanians and Yugoslavs as well as French diplomats (all unworthy victors) were held responsible for the unjust treaty,[27] and Hungarians applauded the two Vienna Awards, granted by Nazi Germany on the eve of the war, that returned some of the lost territories.

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[26] Some of the police records survived systematic Communist destruction after World War II as they were printed in *Magyar Detektív*, a forgotten police monthly between the wars. For the White Terror see Eliza Johnson Ablovatski, "'Cleansing the Red Nest': Counterrevolution and White Terror in Munich and Budapest, 1919" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2004).

[27] One such author was Henri Pozzi, whose *A háború visszatér* (The war returns) saw ten editions (!) by 1935 with dr. Marjay Frigyes kiadó, a fascist publisher.

Belief in the inevitability and legitimacy of territorial revision thus went hand in hand with the myth of double betrayal, scapegoating, and the spirit of revenge. Miklós Zeidler's excellent book on Hungarian revisionism is available in English[28] for additional detail, so I would like to focus on a more specific example: Hungarian filmic propaganda against the Soviet Union during World War II. Postwar communist authorities tried to destroy all copies of these films. The lone survivor appears to be Zoltán Farkas's *Negyedízigen* (To the fourth generation, 1942). This is a pro-Christian, anticommunist propaganda movie that carries no anti-Semitic references. At the siege of a small Russian town, civilians flee, but an old man surrenders to the Hungarian troops. He is István Keresztes, a former Bolshevik leader in the Tiszakövesd Soviet in 1919, who had lived in the Soviet Union since 1920. He is disillusioned, and would like to return to Hungary to his family, among them his son, Gábor. In the battle of Krivoi Rog, Vera, Keresztes's Soviet-born daughter, kills a Hungarian soldier, who later turns out to be her own brother. She then returns to Hungary with her father, where she faces a non-Soviet way of life based on individual achievement and family values, and learns the truth about her brother's death from a returning Hungarian soldier. As the front draws near to Hungary, Vera starts to work for Soviet intelligence. Her conscience and guilt force her to recon with herself. She turns against the Soviets, and gets killed in a shootout with Soviet paratroopers. The title of the movie refers to the Second Commandment: "I do not leave unpunished the sins of those who hate me, but I punish the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations." The movie ends with Keresztes entering a church and reading the very next sentence from the Bible: "But I lavish my love on those who love me and obey my commands, even for a thousand generations."[29]

The Farkas movie takes us to the final two stages of coming to terms with defeat: claiming moral victory and renewal. In the film, the dead-end street of the past is the Hungarian Soviet Republic, and the superiority of Christian faith is established over atheistic communism. Hungarian superiority is represented by the civilized Hungarian troops

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[28] Miklós Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision in Hungary, 1920–1945* (Wayne, N.J.: Center for Hungarian Studies and Publications, 2007).

[29] Exodus 20: 5–6. *New Living Bible*. The symbolism in the film is thinly veiled. Keresztes in Hungarian means someone bearing a cross, or crusader.

liberating the Soviet Union. Soviet inferiority is embodied in Vera: lack of family values, women turned into killing machines, total loss of individuality; all leading to personal tragedy "to the fourth generation."

As has been pointed out, the Fourteen Points had nothing to do with the reconquest of the territories lost in Trianon. The Nazi German alliance and occupation (in 1944) meant that Hungary ended up on the receiving end of still another defeat. A second, even more punitive Treaty of Trianon (1947) was enforced. But, for half a century, Hungary was part of the Soviet bloc together with the successor states; thus any revisionist reconsideration of the treaty was beyond question. Post-World War II democratic Hungary had but two years, and in that period only the first two steps of coming to terms with defeat were taken: dreamland and awakening. The 1947 communist takeover brought about a new historical narrative: that of the "guilty nation" which served as "Hitler's last satellite," and therefore deserved the punishment of the second Trianon Treaty. With a few notable exceptions, communist Hungarian history writing focused not on historical fact but on ideological expectation. This worked against the common sense and experience of the people who witnessed these events, and in 1989 the lid came off.

The lack of proper academic discourse of the past has recently brought about a revival of pre-World War II revisionist literature. On one level, this is a heritage of the communist era. At the end of the war, the Soviet-sponsored, temporary government of Hungary (1944–45) began to issue lists of "Fascist, anti-Soviet, antidemocratic print media."[30] These were to be submitted to the authorities for destruction, and not complying with the regulation had serious legal and personal consequences. The attempt to destroy all printed proof of a way of life combined with the brutal destruction of the social order of prewar Hungary by Stalinist methods resulted in quiet but stubborn resistance, and people hung on to these books. Since 1989 these publications have sold at exorbitant prices at auctions, while a poor man's version of many of these texts is being made available on the internet.[31] Some of these publications contain unacceptable ideas and poorly argued "histories." Others are simply pulp

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[30] *A fasiszta, szovjetellenes, antidemokratikus sajtótermékek jegyzéke*. 3 vols. (Budapest: A Magyar Miniszterelnökség Sajtóosztálya, 1945). These publications were removed even from library catalogs and national bibliographies.

[31] www.axioart.hu is the auction website, and it can be accessed in English, too; www.betiltva.com is one of many websites for such texts.

fiction crime stories depicting Soviet agents in the West in an unfavorable light.

The Fourteen Points in Hungarian History Writing

By way of conclusion let us review the postwar history of the Fourteen Points. The analysis provided in the first half of this essay on the war was made possible by the opening of French (1972) and Russian (1991) archives, by the availability of American and Hungarian primary resources, and by the output of new left history writing. This, however, does not mean that there was no means of reviewing the myths surrounding the Fourteen Points, even before World War II.

Wilson's statements about the coming peace in 1918 received global exposure from the CPI, which circulated 10,000 copies of nine different pamphlets of Wilson speeches in German. Yet, this pamphlet campaign was launched rather late, and the Fourteen Points and the Lippmann-Cobb interpretation reached Hungary at about the same time, just as the war was nearing its end. Hungarian leaders chose to hear the things they wanted to hear and ignore the information they did not want to face: this is how the dreamland of the Károlyi era was born.[32]

In the interwar period much of the primary Wilson material was already available. Thus, for historians of the interwar period the problem was not the shortage of resources. To use, and amend, Schivelbusch's terminology: in interwar Hungary the various stages of coming to terms with defeat existed simultaneously and did not follow one another in strict chronological order. This can be demonstrated by both official Horthy era history writing and the narratives turned out by various extreme right wing movements.

Professor Jenő Horváth was the "official" historian of Trianon between the wars.[33] He contributed the chapter on the diplomatic

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[32] For a fresh and provocative account on the CPI see Gregg Wolper, "The Origins of Public Diplomacy: Woodrow Wilson, George Creel, and the Committee on Public Information" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1991) and my "Against All Odds: Vira B. Whitehouse and Rosika Schwimmer in Switzerland, 1918," *American Studies International* 2002/2: 34–51.

[33] In her dissertation to be defended in 2010, Éva Mathey of the University of Debrecen offers a detailed analysis of Horváth's works. The dissertation deals with the United States and Hungarian revisionism between the world wars.

background of the treaty to the *Justice for Hungary* volume,[34] and penned the most detailed account of what he called the "Hungarian question in the 20th century." In the first of two volumes of this seminal work, he prints the documents of the armistice negotiations between Washington and Vienna, but comes to a surprising conclusion: "President Wilson was unaware of the fact that he lent his support not to freedom but to annexation and that he was set against Emperor Charles in the interest of Czech émigrés."[35] This is the Masaryk myth, according to which the Czech professor convinced the American professor-president behind closed doors to support the reorganization of Central Europe. Horváth, to use Schivelbusch's theory, is in the third stage of coming to terms with defeat: questioning the legitimacy of victory at the expense of balanced historical analysis.

Since territorial revision was achieved with the help of Nazi Germany, the American line is largely missing from the historical narratives of the extreme right. One representative historian of the various fascist movements was Lajos Marschalkó, who blamed Bolshevik Jews and Károlyi for defeat and territorial losses. In *Kik árulták el 1918-ban Magyarországot* (Who betrayed Hungary in 1918) he passes condescending remarks about Károlyi's childlike faith in the Fourteen Points and correctly interprets American diplomatic correspondence that said Point Ten would not be the basis for armistice negotiations.[36] In postwar emigration, he stepped up the rhetoric and described the Hungarian Soviet Republic as "a country of hunchbacks" but failed to mention Wilson or the Fourteen Points.[37] Written in a somewhat different tone, an other key text, *A magyar nemzet őszinte története* (An honest history of the Hungarian nation) by Ödön Málnási, does not even mention the Fourteen Points.[38] Thus, in the historical paradigm of the extreme

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[34] Eugene Horváth, "Diplomatic History of the Treaty of Trianon," in *Justice for Hungary. Review and Criticism of the Effect of the Treaty of Trianon* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1928), 21–121.The book was also printed in Hungarian.

[35] Jenő Horváth, *Felelősség a világháborúért és a békeszerződésért* (Responsibility for the war and the peace) (Budapest: MTA, 1939), 448–53; the quote is from p. 449.

[36] Lajos Marschalkó, *Kik árulták el 1918-ban Magyarországot* (Budapest: Stádium, 1944).

[37] Lajos Marschalkó, *Országhódítók* (Conquerors of the country) (Munich, 1965), Part 2: Chapter 5.

[38] Ödön Málnási, *A magyar nemzet őszinte története* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1937), Chapter 15.

right, the scapegoat was not the misled American president but the physically and mentally distorted "Bolshevik Jews" who ran the Hungarian Soviet Republic.

Postwar Hungarian history writing represented the other extreme. Also using highly emotional language, it turned out dozens of books to demonstrate how western imperialists misrepresented the Soviet system and how they tried to destroy it hand in hand with the prewar elite of Hungary. Hungary's attempt to normalize her relations with the western powers during the 1960s brought about a marked change in the tone and quality of Trianon history writing. Authors like Zsuzsa L. Nagy, Mária Ormos, Tibor Hajdu, Magda Ádám, and Lajos Arday[39] produced surprisingly balanced accounts, given the circumstances in Hungary. Yet, these works did not offer new analyses of the Fourteen Points. The relevant chapter of the 10-part, 20-volume history of Hungary put out by the Academy did. The authors interpreted Wilson's speech as an attempt to "dissuade the Soviet government from making a separate peace and promised help in its fight" against the Germans. But, the authors go on, he also tried to "monopolize the Soviet program for peace and partly tailor it to the designs of American imperialism."[40] Like in the case of Horváth, ideological concerns overrode historical analysis.

Communist Hungary had an interesting problem with American history in general and the Fourteen Points in particular. American history and American studies were relegated to the realm of "if you don't talk about it, it doesn't exist." In the cultural policy of "the three T-s," it fell considerably closer to "Tilt" (forbid) than "Tűr" (tolerate), while "Támogat" (support) was never an option. On the other hand, the establishment viewed itself as the heir apparent of "the Glorious Hungarian Soviet Republic" and treated the time between 1919 and 1947 as an unnecessary, fascist dead-end street. It described Hungary's road from defeat to communism as a natural process in 1918–19, but in this discourse the Fourteen Points could not be ignored. This dichotomy can

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[39] For details see notes 20 and 22 above; Zsuzsa L. Nagy, *A párizsi békekonferencia és Magyarország, 1919* (The Paris Peace Conference and Hungary, 1919) (Budapest: Kossuth, 1965), Lajos Arday, *Térkép, csata után. Magyarország a brit külpolitikában, 1918–1919* (Map after battle. Hungary in British foreign policy, 1918–1919) (Budapest: Magvető, 1990).

[40] Péter Hanák, et al., eds., *Magyarország története 1890–1918*. 2 vols. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1978): 2: 1181.

be observed in education policy, too. With two to three history classes a week, secondary school history textbooks of my generation covered four American topics in four years: the American Revolution, the Civil War, the Fourteen Points, and Roosevelt's New Deal.

It follows from the above that the three major schools of Trianon history writing of the first 70 years in Hungary evaluated the Fourteen Points on the basis of preconceptions and not facts. All in all, before 1989 there was always some consideration that overruled historical common sense in telling the story of the Fourteen Points. The task was left for our generation, and with this essay I intended to start academic discussion.